



# MARY LOU DICKERSON

State Representative • 36th Legislative District



## Fall 2003 36th District Report

### **Committees**

*Chairwoman*, Juvenile Justice  
& Family Law  
Children & Family Services  
Transportation

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### **The Legislature's Internet Home Page**

<http://www.leg.wa.gov>

Dear Neighbors,

Much has happened in the six months since my previous legislative report. I'm writing to give you an update on legislative news and to tell you about some of the issues I'm working on for next session.

You'll see information in this newsletter on:

- State budget challenges and how the Legislature is responding.
- The new statewide transportation plan.
- Progress in protecting our environment.
- Washington's new video-game violence law.
- Prescription drug reform.
- My proposal to expand senior citizen property-tax relief.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to invite you to my district office in Ballard. It's easy to find, on the corner of 22<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and Market Street (Suite 310 A in the Ballard Office Building).

If you can't find time to visit in person, please remember you can always reach me quickly through any of the phone numbers and addresses on this page. If you have an idea for a state law, or are having problems dealing with a state agency, or you'd like information about a state policy or service, give me a call. I take great pride in serving constituents, and so does my Legislative Assistant, Jenny Egan.

Let's keep in touch!

*Mary Lou Dickerson*

Mary Lou Dickerson  
State Representative, 36<sup>th</sup> District

## Another challenging budget

The national economic downturn continues to cause serious state budget problems throughout the country, including here in Washington. Earlier this year, the Legislature faced a budget deficit of more than \$2.6 billion, which led to deep and wide budget cuts affecting virtually every state priority.

While major budget cuts were unavoidable, I would have preferred fewer reductions balanced with a harder look at finding additional revenues to make sure truly necessary services survived.

The pie chart shows the general areas where significant reductions were made this year. Among the specific budget reductions:

- Basic Health Plan was reduced to 100,000 enrollees.
- Funding for Treatment Alternatives to Street Crime was reduced.
- Class size and teacher salary initiatives were suspended.
- Eligibility for certain long-term care programs was reduced.
- 1,100 state jobs were eliminated.
- Funding for drug and alcohol treatment was cut.
- Home Care Workers will get a 75¢ raise, but this is much smaller than the Initiative 775 contract negotiated by the state.
- Higher education funding was sharply reduced, and tuitions increased.

Thanks in large measure to the work of fellow 36<sup>th</sup> District Rep. Helen Sommers, we did avoid devastating budget cuts that had been proposed for the Children's Health Insurance Program, prenatal care services, adult vision and hearing care, and other services that help people in time of need. Still, these are difficult budget times for our state and nation, and they are not over yet.

As we prepare for the 2004 legislative session, I will again urge lawmakers

my proposal (unanimously!) to systematically examine which local government services have proved most effective at reducing juvenile crime and preserving families. The findings will help us target limited resources to high impact services.

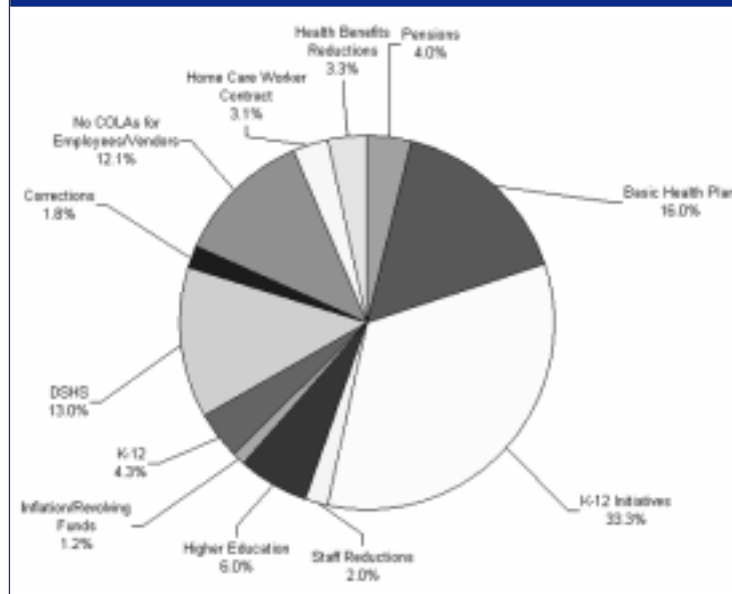
### ► *Respecting our environment*

Protecting our environmental heritage is a core value for me. We made important gains this year, but still have much to do. Key successes included:

- Passing legislation to reduce mercury contamination in the environment.
- Gov. Locke's veto of the attempted repeal of Initiative 713, which banned cruel steel-jaw traps and poisons. Repealing the initiative was the wrong way to tackle problems with moles and other pests.
- Preserving funding for the oil spill rescue tug to protect Orcas and clean water in Puget Sound.
- Creating incentives to promote biodiesel and other renewable fuels that are good for the environment and reduce dependence on foreign oil.

I'm currently working on efforts to promote Orca recovery, funded partly by a special Orca license plate, and to reduce environmental risks from improper disposal of electronic waste. I'm also urging Gov. Locke to use available funds to reduce Persistent Bioaccumulative Toxins which threaten our environment and public health.

### State budget reductions by area



to re-examine some of the special interest tax-breaks that have grown over the decades. We cannot solve fiscal problems with budget cuts alone without seriously harming education and vital services.

### ► *Reducing juvenile crime*

We've dramatically reduced juvenile crime over the past decade, but we can do even better. With strong support from King County Prosecutor Norm Maleng, the Legislature passed

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## Prescription drug reform

Prescription drug reform will be remembered as one of the great Washington state successes of 2003. The new reforms encourage – but do not require – doctors to prescribe medications from a “preferred drug list” that reflects the best scientific evidence on cost-effective medicines. This list will allow the state to reap huge discounts through bulk purchasing – saving state taxpayers more than \$10 million *each* year.

Just as importantly, some 590,000 low-income senior citizens and disabled persons will be able to reduce their prescription drug costs by joining the state’s purchasing pool. I wanted to make the discounts available to everyone in the state, but this is a good start. The reforms also launch an educational outreach effort to help people find other prescription drug discounts that may be available to them.

By the time you read this, the state will have a new web site devoted to the prescription drug reform ([www.rx.wa.gov](http://www.rx.wa.gov)). A toll-free number to answer questions about the reforms will be available a few weeks later.

*I recently received an Outstanding Citizen Award from the Seattle Police Department for my work on video-game violence. Many thanks to Seattle Police Chief Gil Kerlikowski (in photo), who nominated me for this tremendous honor.*

## Transportation

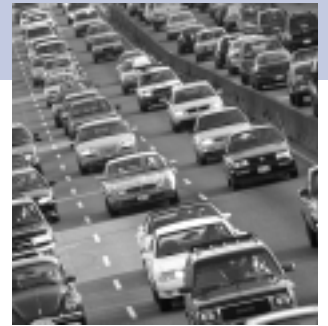
As a member of the House Transportation Committee, I can tell you it wasn’t easy to pass the first major increase in transportation investments in over a decade. But with strong support from the business community, Democrats and Republicans finally united behind a 10-year, \$4.2 billion plan to improve transportation. Several key investments will help us locally, including:

- Highway congestion relief on I-5, I-405, SR 520 and other bottlenecks.
- \$177 million to launch work on the Alaskan Way Viaduct & Seattle Seawall.
- Earthquake safety improvements on the Aurora Bridge.
- Long-needed pedestrian overpass on SR 99 (Aurora Ave.) at Galer St.

The transportation plan, which is funded mainly by a nickel increase in the gas tax, a 15 percent increase in truck weight fees, and a 0.3 percent sales tax on vehicles, will also relieve traffic congestion through major investments in rail, freight mobility, vanpools, ferries, and other transportation alternatives.

### ► **What do you think?**

In the months ahead, I’ll be at meetings on the Alaskan Way Viaduct to speak up for our local interests. I’d like to hear your views. I’d also welcome your ideas on future directions in transportation. I was recently appointed the Democratic lead on a new legislative working group on Innovations in Transportation Solutions. We’ll be examining innovative ideas ranging from new technologies to Metro’s flexcar program. Ideas, anyone?



## Public Meeting – *Center City Forum 2003*

### **Transit Integration** ***Many Projects*** ***One Downtown***

#### **When:**

Thursday, October 9, 2003  
5:00 PM - 8:00 PM

#### **Where:**

Union Station  
401 South Jackson Street  
Seattle, WA

# MARY LOU DICKERSON

State Representative  
36th Legislative District

## Senior property-tax relief



Did you know that Washington's senior property-tax relief program helps nearly 20,000 *fewer* seniors and disabled persons than it helped in 1996? I'm sponsoring legislation to fix the program.

The problem is that the \$30,000 income ceiling that determines eligibility for senior property-tax relief hasn't been adjusted for inflation in over five years. This is already the longest period without an inflation adjustment since Washington voters created the tax relief program in 1966. And unless we address the problem, additional thousands of seniors and disabled retirees will be dropped from the program in the years ahead.

I've proposed raising the income-eligibility ceiling to account for inflation since 1998. This would allow at least 14,000 additional retirees to qualify for property-tax relief. Partly because of our state's budget problems, my proposal was not enacted during the 2003 session. But I'm gathering support from both Democratic and Republican lawmakers, and will continue fighting for additional senior citizen tax relief in 2004. Seniors need the help, and it's the right thing to do.

## Campaign for a Game Smart Community

We did it! When lawmakers saw examples of the brutal, racist and sick video games being marketed to young children, they overwhelmingly passed my proposal to ban sales of games that depict assaults on law enforcement officers to children under age 17 without their parents' permission. This is the first state law in the nation to regulate direct sales of ultra-violent games to children. A court is reviewing an industry challenge to the new law.

In a related effort, Mothers Against Violence In America (MAVIA) and I have partnered to launch a "Campaign for a Game Smart Community" to help parents take control over their children's games. We're getting wonderful bipartisan support from King County leaders such as Police Chief Gil Kerlikowske, Prosecutor Norm Maleng, Sheriff David Reichert and King County Executive Ron Sims, and are already working with community leaders in other counties to launch parallel efforts.

The goal is to inform parents about ultra-violent games and encourage retailers to stop selling adult games to kids in violation of the video-game industry's own rating system. This is truly a grass-roots effort, and you can be a part of it. To learn more about ultra-violent video games and how you can help, please contact my office at (206) 545-6513 or (360) 786-7860.

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